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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden  
at Galeed Chapel Brighton  
on Sunday morning 18 May 1924

JOHN 10 v 27/28/29/30

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are One"

To hear God's voice is a very great matter. It was great for God to talk to Adam in innocency because of his created righteousness. How much greater a matter is it for God to talk with a sinner on the grounds of the Creator's righteousness. Man, being a rational creature, and created for God's glory, was made in the likeness of God. God did commune with His creature Adam, exalted him above all the creation, gave him dominion over all things - "though we see not yet all things put under him". He brought to Adam every creature and gave Adam the wisdom and the authority to name every creature. There was, what we can never really conceive, between Adam and God, an intimacy according to the relationship of creature and Creator, of God and subject. Sin finished any communion on the grounds of man's innocency. Fallen Adam heard God's voice again and when he heard it he trembled, he hid himself in the trees of the garden, and what a tremendous difference, his hearing the same voice of the same God, and his beautiful, beneficial hearing of it, his communion with that God before that time. What havoc sin brought in the garden of Eden in man. "I heard Thy voice and was afraid" was the answer of Adam to his God when God enquired where he was. How terrible that was to Adam and what fearfulness seized him in the fullness of it no other man will ever know, for he began with perfect communion with God, and with innocence before God. His fall was very great and God placed an angel with a flaming sword that turned in every direction after He had driven out Adam from the garden lest he should return to take of the tree of life and live for ever; lest His holy law, His holiness in the

commandment He had given to Adam when He placed him in the garden - to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil - lest His holiness in that law be violated, lest Adam eating of the tree of life, live; yet being a sinner should live. This expresses what every person that is alive to God is brought to know. We do not start as Adam started in communion with God, but we start responsible to Him. We start living creatures with immortal souls, only we are born in sin, shapen in iniquity. "By one man" - Paul speaking of Adam in the Romans declared - "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin and so death passed upon all men in that all have sinned". And that awful truth the mass of men are entirely ignorant of because they are dead. But there comes a time when such as are eternally designed by God for communion with Him in eternity, such as are elected and predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son and to be with Him for His glory eternally, realising this, come in their measure into the precise condition in which Adam was when he said - "I heard Thy voice and was afraid because I was naked". Union with Adam caused us to receive a tainted and fallen nature, and this is made known by God when He speaks to a sinner, when He convinces him of this great, this awful truth, that he is a sinner, that he has sinned. There is one terrible truth which the people enlightened by God have to learn and it is this, that they do not - for they are not sinners because they commit sin - but they commit sin because they are sinners. It is an awful revelation; it is like a death knell of all natural, human hopes of reaching God's presence. It is an awful voice, God's when He gives the sentence of death to a person, when what he has known for years becomes a solemn, living reality in him, when God says, in effect, to him, Where art thou? When He causes him to feel that His holy eye is upon him, that he cannot escape that eye, though in his spirit he often would do as Adam tried to do, hide himself. You may hide your sins from your fellow creatures by a consistent life and they may look upon you as a very upright and moral person, but when the light of God's glory, of His omniscience, is distinctly apprehended shining within, there is a perception of being in the presence of God in all the blackness of your sin, discovered to Him as you are. I wonder how many of us here have been brought to that point; how many of us here have been visited by the Eternal God, as in the voice of His law

He came to Adam in the garden saying - "Where art thou?" If He has, you know it. If God has made you to realise that you have sinned against Him, and are a sinner against Him, and that He marks your iniquities, and that, dying in your sins, you have nothing to say why He should not eternally curse you, you must know it. This is the quickening visitation of God, His voice in condemnation, His bringing in His law your mouth into the dust of dumbness. In the 3 chapter of the Romans, Paul expresses this clearly when speaking of various sins in every man, he declares that whatsoever the law saith it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God. And what an awful thing it would be if that voice only, and eternally, and without any intermission or remission, spoke to us, when our short mortal race were done. Though the speaking of it in this short span of time would be terrible, then eternal wrath in the voice of God's law would be our portion. Unrest, an uneasy conscience, a worm that dieth not, a fire that shall never go out; a pit into which we should sink and never come to the bottom of those Scriptural expressions of what a person must receive as being under the law of works under which he was created. May the Lord save us from being ignorant of this. If any here have to say well I have never been before God in my shameful nakedness and pollution and sin, may He, in His great mercy, cause you to pray with the hymnwriter

Convince us of our sins  
Then lead to Jesus' blood

If you are enabled to pray that, who doubt whether you have had a right start in your religion, to pray it from your hearts to God, the time will come when, though you will have a good deal of trouble, and know something of the holiness of God against your sin, yet the time will come when you will enter into eternal rest.

But there is another voice; the same God has a second voice, no less holy, but not terrible, not forbidding, not chilling, not repelling, but a voice that is a still, small, comforting, healing, encouraging, attracting voice of mercy. The first voice fits a person to seek for, to wait upon God for, and

to hear from Him, this second voice. All shall hear the first, either in this life or in eternity at the Judgement. The same voice that convinces a sinner of his sins here in the law, is the voice that will say - "Depart from Me ye cursed" in eternity. But not all hear the second voice; some do; they are made to long to hear it; their restlessness in their conscience, their conviction, their death, their distance from God, their pollution, all become to them terrible, an intolerable load, a restlessness, and from time to time they feel to be pining away in the hopelessness of their condition in their sins, and they long for mercy. They hardly know what they mean, though they know what they do mean as to the effect of it, but the way of mercy they hardly can explain, but it is this, in the substance of it - O God, show me mercy; cover my sins; remove Thine anger from me; come and manifest pardon. There is that distinct thing in true spiritual life that makes the person, though he dreads God as under the law, though he dreads His curse against his sins, yet really underneath all longs for God's presence, longs to have peace with God, and I do believe that this is one great point of difference between a person under legal terrors who is dead in trespasses and sins, but who fears the consequence of his sins, and a person who is quickened by the Holy Ghost into divine life, who says in his heart that there is nothing can satisfy him. But could he have sin, all the pleasures of sin, with no prospect of any kind of punishment for those sins, he would rather, infinitely rather, be separated from sin. He would be holy. And yet how to come to God, how to find Him, he knows not. He is in darkness, and gropes for the wall like them that have no eyes. At times he has in his heart an awful sense of darkness and of impending death, but he does not always live there. Longer or shorter may be the duration of what we call, for convenience, a law work, but it does not always continue. When the person is brought down to that point which is described in Deuteronomy - When I see that there is no strength shut up or left - then says the Lord I will repent for My people. Ah but it is a great thing to hear this second voice. First we may say that the sheep of Christ hear His voice by way of encouragement; the still small voice of Christ in a gracious, encouraging word. such a word as this - "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". O what a great thing it

is to hear such a voice as that. It makes Him who speaks a little known. You can never hear the still small voice of the Son of God in the gospel and not have some knowledge of Him who speaks, of His heart toward you. It is an attracting voice, an encouraging one, and it has a healing virtue in it to heal despair. It makes the person say - Does the Lord invite sinners? Does He say, Come? Does He say it to those who are polluted? does He say "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men?" It makes the person set himself, it makes him say in his heart, who can tell but that I may find what I want? Who can tell but yet peace is for me? A word of encouragement like this the sheep of Christ hear sometimes - I will help thee. You may think perhaps as it is quoted, such a simple word as that is very commonplace, but if you have been, or are, where I have just described under the law, and in darkness, it will be a great light to you, to hear the blessed Son of God say that to you. I will help thee.

"My sheep hear My voice". They hear the voice of mercy for guilty sinners. Christ's voice is a voice that speaks loudly in the heart, that speaks effectually in heaven, that speaks effectually to His people even though they are feelingly in the belly of hell. It speaks effectual encouragement to a desponding, despairing heart. It says, there is mercy, there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared, and when that voice is heard the forgiveness with God becomes a reality. The sinner says I will go for that pardon, I will wait on God for that mercy. It puts into his heart a plea, it enables him to go upon the strength of the voice, the word of Christ. My sheep hear it. It is heard in the secret of the soul, perhaps without a word; the voice of Christ is heard by the sheep. You perhaps, some of you, can understand this, how that the voice of the Lord Jesus is heard without a word. Some comfort, some strengthening, some drawing to the throne of grace, some rising up of a Who can tell in your heart. All this is by the voice of the Son of God.

But there are several distinct words as to the substance of these words, the truth contained in them, that the saints are brought to hear. There is this word, the word of declared forgiveness. There is a voice in the word, a life, that is to

say, it is not a dead word. When Christ says, "I have redeemed thee"; when He says "I have blotted out thy transgressions and thy sins as a thick cloud", I say there is a voice in it; distinct, all so distinct from reading the words with the natural mind or thinking of them. The word is animated by the voice. No audible sound, of course, because it is a spiritual voice, but O, it has an effect, it enters the heart, it animates the soul with hope; it gives a sweetness to Christ in the heart and draws the heart out to Him who speaks. It gives to the soul a possession that it did not have before. "My sheep" says Christ "hear My voice", and in some measure the poor sheep by the voice of Christ is made to realise that he is a sheep and that he has a Shepherd. Have you heard such a voice? It is a holy one, a solemn voice. It has to do with a very terrible matter, even sin, and condemnation, so that when the voice is heard there is a trembling; there is a rejoicing with trembling. "My sheep hear My voice".

They hear the voice of Christ at times bringing to them fresh encouragements, telling them of Himself, the foundation of all encouragement. Did you ever hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ as He speaks, as He speaks to His Father in that intercessory prayer in the 17 John? They, the disciples, heard it in an audible voice, but the spiritual voice of Christ in that prayer I believe is heard by the saints today, sinners though they are and in themselves utterly unworthy. They hear the voice of the Son of God and live in a sweet hope of the fulfilment of that prayer. Christ speaks of Himself upon earth that His people, hearing His voice, may rejoice in Him. O, as our Pastor said last Friday evening, how thankful he was that there is a Jesus Christ. So when you hear the voice of the Son of God declaring Himself in His Person, in His love for His people, in His Sonship; when He declares also His Father and His Father's will, there is a rejoicing. John rejoiced when he heard the Bridegroom's voice, though as he says: "I must decrease, He must increase". It has that effect, to humble a man, and yet to encourage and strengthen him, to hear the voice of the Son of God. But especially the voice of the Shepherd which expresses tender care and watchfulness and wisdom. A shepherd takes all the care of the sheep. A shepherd in the eastern countries used

to possess the sheep. The owner of the sheep was the shepherd oftentimes, and spiritually it is so. "My sheep hear My voice", and there is not a difficulty, not a trial, not a darkness into which you go, not a trouble, not a necessity, not a sin that pains you within, not a temptation that comes to you, in which the voice of God, as heard, will not help and sooner or later deliver you. "My sheep hear My voice". They do not hear it so often as they want to do; it is not an everyday experience for the sheep to hear the voice of the Shepherd, a child of God to hear the voice of Christ. But O, if we have heard it, if we have and do not hear it now, what is our language? What are we, by having heard the voice of Christ, capable of praying? What do we pray? "Be not silent unto me". It is a necessary voice; there is no encouragement but for that voice. There is no direction but by Him who speaks, the Lord Jesus, the Shepherd of the sheep, and therefore there are times when the poor sheep, as being in silence with regard to God says, Lord be not silent to me; Thy words are meat to me; Thy voice is music in my ear; Thy Name is precious, it is a fragrant Name. Thy presence is salvation from sin, and from despair. It is salvation, it is comfort; Lord let me hear Thy voice. But what shall one say who has never heard it and yet who longs to do? Are there people who long to hear the voice of Christ and have never heard it? There are. Are there some here who sometimes in the very depth of their souls say - "The companions hearken to Thy voice" the children of God, the saints, hear Thee speak to them; they have communion with Thee - "Cause me to hear it". Well, the Gentile church in the Canticles is shown as praying that as seeing the Jews. So a poor sinner who has to say he has never heard the voice of Christ to his satisfaction - Lord cause me to hear it. Speak to me, say something to me; say this - "I am thy salvation". Well that is the character of a sheep, to pray, to seek for the Shepherd. It is an injunction many times repeated in the Scripture and it is infallibly wrought in every child of God - "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near". And that, for wicked people - "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him and to our God for He will abundantly pardon". Now the voice of the Lord Jesus is in that word. It is not the voice of an absolute God which says there is no way to

the tree of life. It is an inviting word; may the voice of the Lord Jesus be in it to some wicked person here, to some unrighteous person here, so that, being an effectual voice, he may turn to find the blessedness of this abundant pardon. "My sheep hear My voice". There is one word which Christ speaks, which He once spoke, but the voice, that is the virtue, the effect, the blessedness of which is still fragrant and it is this, on Calvary's cross He said - "It is finished". Now that will finish up in your soul for the time as the voice of Christ is heard in it - all questionings as to the efficacy of His work, as to the completeness of what He did. It will finish in you all questions as to whether you ought, or ought not, to trust alone in His atonement and that is a great thing to hear that much of the voice of Christ. O, what it has been to me sometimes to have the voice of Christ in those words "It is finished". My friends, I have laid my whole eternity on that. It has strengthened me to believe that I should get to heaven. It has stilled the voice of the enemy and the avenger. It has comforted my heart many times when near despair; has brought me up out of a horrible pit; many a time that has "It is finished". The Person who said it lives. What He says is true everlastingly; the sin of the whole church finished, the work of redemption completed. My sheep hear it. There are times when the saints, the sheep of God hear the voice of Christ in reproof. Not the voice of God in His curse, but the voice of the Shepherd in correction. You may be, some of you, in an evil condition, conscious of it, distant from God, with no particular or keen spiritual appetite for Himself, or His things, and yet perfectly helpless in this, your conscious, evil state; almost prayerless in it. Now you may, in such a condition, hear Christ's voice, saying - for it is Christ's voice; it is the voice of God's mercy and that is Christ's voice, saying - "Hast thou not procured these things unto thyself in that thou forsookest the Lord thy God when He led thee by the way?" It is a very solemn thing to hear the voice of the Lord in reproof, but it is blessed; O, it is merciful. You will find - I believe it is true; I have found it you will find though on the one hand it does press you down, and fill you with grief, yet on the other hand it does support in this, your evil state, and does give you a longing, earnest desire to be brought out of it, to hear the

voice of the Lord in it, telling you of it, especially when it says - "The Lord your God"; when He condescends still to own you as His though you have sinned against Him. I believe that I have heard Christ's voice in solemn reproofs. It is a very great mercy. In the 2 and 3 chapters of the Revelations particularly. Christ's word is, and His voice is in it, to the church of God. May He give us ears to hear what he says to us.

Another voice, another word, in which the voice of Christ is and is connected with what I have just said - O, and it is a blessed voice; it is a voice of invitation in this connection, invitation to return - "O Israel return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity". What a gracious voice it is. Look, for a moment, at the voice of God at the garden of Eden in that sword. What was that voice? "Depart from Me ye cursed into hell fire". Then to hear the voice of Christ - "Return unto the Lord thy God". And if you hear it in this connection - namely I have redeemed thee, return unto Me, thou art My possession; I purchased thee - that is a very great, a heart-breaking voice. Dear Lord and may I come? Art Thou still the same? May I, thy sheep, may I return? Art Thou my Redeemer?

"And they follow Me". They follow Him in His commandments. "I know them". Christ knows you if you are His. He knows His people before they know Him. He knew them from eternity. O He knew us from eternity. If He knew some of you who now are dead in trespasses and sins, from eternity, the time will come when you will be made to long to hear His voice and to follow Him. Christ, in one chapter in this gospel declares that the hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and they that hear shall live. There is life in His voice and it communicates life to the dead. "I am the resurrection and the life" said the Lord Jesus and He communicates that life.

"I know them". This is a very great thing to apprehend. You will remember that David, when the Lord had promised much blessing to him and his house, he went to the Lord and thanked Him and blessed Him and said "Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto? and this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord GOD; but Thou hast spoken also

of Thy servant's house for a great while to come". And he said "for Thou, Lord GOD, knowest Thy servant". (1 Samuel 7 v 18/19/20). "I know them". He does not look upon us—as we may look upon each other. He knows us in our worst state - I knew that thou wouldst be a transgressor from the womb - (Isaiah 48 v 8) is another word of Christ's. Nevertheless; nevertheless, I will not alter the word that is gone out of My mouth. His knowledge of your sins will not prevent His mercy. "I know them". He knows all of them - the hidden ones - He knows them to think of them for good. "I will delight in thee to do thee good with all my heart". He knows them beneficially, takes care of them, thinks of them as He says - "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end." And as you may apprehend this, what will it do? What does it do? It brings you to commit yourself to Him. And it will prevent, as you apprehend this also, prevent you from trying to hide your case from Him, but enable you to reveal it to Him.

"I know them and they follow Me". What a great thing it is to be a follower of Christ. Christ went to heaven; His people are following Him. They deserve hell; He endured that hell. They fear they will never get to heaven, but as He leads they follow in the way thitherward, asking their way with supplications and crying; often in darkness, not knowing really that they are in the way to heaven sometimes feelingly. They follow Christ. This implies His leading; you cannot follow one who does not lead, and Christ is a blessed Leader and Commander of His people "When I put forth My sheep I go before them". He went into trouble, He went into imputed sin, He went under the law, He went into death, He went into temptation, He went into the grave; and though the saints do not go under the curse of God, they follow the Lord Jesus in their experience, in their experience of the bitterness of sin in some measure. They follow Him. As He went into temptation, they go into temptation. They follow Him into death, though their death is a necessity, and it is for themselves they die alone. Christ died for them; He is before them in it all. There is no place where a child of God is, but the Lord Jesus is really with them. But as to a distinct apprehension of following Him, this is a different matter. He

leads them by the right way to a city of habitation though they do not perhaps very often feel persuaded that it is the right way. It is a crooked way, and when they see it to be crooked, then they are dismayed. Then the Lord perhaps will come and declare to them that the crooked shall be made straight and they are encouraged by the promise. They follow Him; where He leads them they fain would go. When He encourages they can walk in the dark. When He gives intimations that He has not utterly left them then they are enabled to stand fast; they follow Him. Particularly they follow Him without the camp, out of the world. Christ leads people out of the world, out of the spirit of it as well as out of the practice of it. It is a great thing to have Christ as your example as well as Christ as your Redeemer and as the First-fruits unto God for you, because when Christ is your example there is power in that example. Did Christ eschew all evil and is He your Saviour? Does not that make you want to eschew evil? When you are tempted to some looseness in practice, will not Christ's example bring you to follow Him rather than what is usual, even as amongst professors? Practical godliness of a true kind comes from the example, unctuously wrought in the soul by the Lord Jesus. Perhaps you may be brought to such a practical thing as this about a certain practice. Now would I like the Lord Jesus to see me here? Could I ask the Lord's presence and His blessing upon what I am now doing? And it is not any sanctimoniousness or superiority that is affecting you, but just a tender regard for the Lord and a wanting to do that which pleases Him, because He has redeemed you. They follow Him. He also guides them into all truth and He guides them in the way of righteousness. May the Lord cause us to hear His voice, give us to realise that He knows us; whoever disowns us, whoever does not know us, that He knows us to do us good and enable us, by His presence and grace, to follow Him whithersoever He leadeth.

AMEN.